

Many benefits in teaching babies

HAVING spent nine months suspended in the warm fluid of a mother's womb, newborn babies have a natural affinity with the water.

Once baby is born, parents can help maintain this affinity that their baby has with the water through their initial bath-time routines.

However, as they become older, babies can lose their inherent love of the water and become fearful.

The progression from the bath to early infant swim lessons can ensure baby learns to enjoy the aquatic experience from an early age, while at the same time providing baby with many benefits that extend well beyond the swimming pool.

Swimming is a complete physical workout, which in turn assists the development of the heart, lungs and muscles of your baby.

The physical activity that swimming offers stimulates the appetite of baby, which promotes food digestion and boosts the immune system.

Regular swimming also aids in the development of sleep patterns. One reason parents love to have their baby in swim lessons is for the deeper and longer sleep

Swim safer

With
Julia Ham



that invariably follows a swim session.

Even though the class may appear gentle and relaxing, the baby very often exerts themselves to an extent that they are exhausted by the end of the half hour.

The myriad activities, faces, free movement, splashing and noise (laughing/songs) stimulates baby's brain, which assists in sight, hearing, touch, balance and co-ordination development of baby.

The freedom that water provides allows a baby to exercise more muscles than they could possible expect to use on land.

We know that movement is crucial to development, so the expanded opportunity for movement available in an aquatic environment is sure to help infant brain development.

Extra benefits include the self esteem and sense of independence that are produced when baby learns to

move themselves through the water.

Swimming lessons are a wonderfully intimate activity between parent and child that provide a one-on-one bonding opportunity.

The group class structure of swim lessons provides a chance for interaction with teachers and other children and parents, and enhances a child's social skills and their capacity to follow instructions and directions.

Most importantly, babies who attend formal swim lessons develop better safety skills around the water as they know their capabilities and have practised a variety of skills, such as turning around in the water to return to the pool edge, reaching for objects, and holding on to the side until help arrives.

Babies who swim from an early age are more relaxed and confident in the water, and starting swim lessons at an early age can help in avoiding the emotional stress that may come with starting at a later age.

■ Hampton Swim School offers infant aquatic lessons from three months. For inquiries, phone 3399 2004.